

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Speaking parts

The God PAN, as prologue

CHAIAREAS, a parasite

SOSTRATOS, a young man in love, son of Kallippides

PYRRHIAS, servant to Sostratos

KNEMON, an old misanthropic farmer

DAOS, servant to Gorgias

GORGIAS, a poor farmer, stepson and neighbour to Knemon

SIKON, a hired cook

GETAS, servant to Kallippides

KALLIPPIDES, a wealthy farmer, father of Sostratos

DAUGHTER of Knemon, with whom Sostratos has fallen in love

SIMIKE, an old hag, Knemon's only servant

Non-speaking parts

A sheep

A crowd of people going to a festival, among them Sostratos' mother and sister, a servant girl named Plangon, a female flute-player named Parthenis, and two male servants named Donax and Syrus

Knemon's wife, named Myrrhine

The SCENE is a country lane in Phyle, a village on the mountain slopes of Mount Parnes about fifteen miles north-west of Athens. At the back of the stage, in the centre, stands a shrine to Pan and the Nymphs. On one side of it (probably to the spectators' right), and built on to it, is Knemon's farmhouse. On the other side of the shrine, but not attached to it, is Gorgias' farmhouse.

The time is the late fourth century B.C. It is morning.

DYSKOLOS

The Man Who Didn't Like People

PROLOGUE

(Enter PAN, from his shrine. He addresses the audience).

PAN I would like you to imagine that this scene here represents Phyle, a village in Attica. This shrine I've emerged from belongs to the people of the place - and to anybody who's got the ability to farm these rocks. It's quite a celebrated shrine. Now this farm here on the right - it belongs to Knemon. He's an inhuman human - very inhuman: a fellow who's bad-tempered with everybody. And he doesn't like crowds. Crowds, eh? Why, he's never said a kind word to any individual in all his life, and he's lived a pretty long time. He's never gone up to anybody to greet him with a polite "Good morning", apart from me. And he only does it to me because he has to, out of religious form, through living next door to me and always going past my shrine. Oh, by the way, I'm the god Pan. Anyway, I'm quite sure he changes his mind about being polite to me the minute he's gone past my shrine!

Well, for all his solitary ways, he actually got married - to a widow, whose first husband had died and left her with a little baby boy. He was at loggerheads with his wife from the start, and he spent all the daytime and a large part of the night, too, in having a miserable time. Then they had a little daughter born to them. That made it worse, and when the trouble reached a point where you couldn't ever expect any change, and life was all hardship and misery, his wife left him. She went back to her son, the boy who was born before her second marriage. He owned a little farm here, nearly next door to the old man. That's the place where he's now looking after his mother and a loyal family servant, as well as himself. But they don't do so well.

He's quite a young man now, with a head on him that's older than his years. It's Experience of Life - that's what has schooled him. And all this time the old man's been living all by himself, except for his daughter and an old woman who looks after them. Old Knemon's always working, collecting firewood or digging on his land, and detesting every human being, beginning with his neighbours here, and going on right down to the plain of Attica over there. But as for the old man's daughter, well, she's grown up like her environment - quite unsophisticated: not a wicked notion in her head. She looks after the shrine and the nymphs who share it with me, yes, she's so devoted and respectful to us that we've been persuaded to look after her in return. There's a fellow who farms a lot of land near here, worth thousands of pounds, and he has a son. Just about eighteen, and rather a man about town. Now this young man has been out hunting with a servant of his, and the chase has brought them to these parts, as it happens, and I've put him under a spell. That's the top and bottom of the situation. As for the details, you are going to see them, if you like - and you'd better like! As a matter of fact, I think I can see the young man coming this way now, and his parasite with him. They're having a private discussion about the recent events.

(PAN retires into his shrine).

ACT ONE

(PAN having retired into his shrine to avoid being seen by them, SOSTRATOS and his parasite CHAIREAS now enter. SOSTRATOS is wearing a fine woollen cloak, and CHAIREAS is clothed in the traditional black of his profession; the two are in the middle of a conversation.)

CHAIREAS What's that? You saw a free girl here putting gar- 50 lands on the heads of the nymphs next door, and you'd fallen in love with her before you could get away? At first sight, Sostratos?

SOSTRATOS Yes, at first sight.

CHAIR. Quick work! Now you're sure you hadn't made up your mind to fall in love before you came out?

SOSTR. You're laughing at me, but really, Chaireas, I feel terrible.

CHAIR. I'm willing to believe you.

SOSTR. That's why I've brought you in on this affair. I thought you were a good friend - and practical, too.

CHAIR. Sostratos, that's just what I am in things like this. Now suppose friend number one's in love with a you-know-what. Well, he calls me in to help. Not a minute's delay. I grab her, carry her off, get drunk, burn her door down if she's awkward. In short, I've no time for the rationalistic approach. You've got to get her even before you've asked her name. If you take too long, the fellow's infatuation gets out of control. Be quick about it, and you can stop quickly. Now suppose friend number two is burbling about "settling down" and "a nice good-class girl". I'm quite a different person then. I make enquiries: you know, about her family, how much money they've got, and about what the girl's really like. That way I leave a sort of permanent reminder to my friend: it doesn't matter how I arrange the courting, the results are permanent.

SOSTR. Yes, yes, and you do it very well. But not in the way that I want it (this last remark probably aside).

CHAIR. And now we must hear all about it.

Act One

SOSTR. Well, just after daybreak I sent Pyrrhias, the fellow who was out hunting with me, on an errand.

CHAIR. Where to?

SOSTR. I sent him to see the girl's father, or whoever's the legal guardian of the house where she lives.

CHAIR. Herakles! What a thing to do!

SOSTR. It was all wrong, I admit it. It's not done to give that kind of job to a servant. But you know, when you're in love, it's not so easy to know the right thing to do. Anyhow, he's been away a long time now, I wonder what's causing the delay; I told him to report back home to me as soon as he had discovered how things were.

(At this moment the servant PYRRHIAS rushes blindly onto the stage.)

PYRRHIAS Let me get past, look out, get out of the way, everybody - he's insane, the chap who's chasing me, he's off his rocker.

SOSTR. What's the matter, boy?

PYRRH. He's throwing lumps of earth at me, and stones. I'm all in.

SOSTR. Throwing? Where, you fool?

PYRRH. Perhaps...he's not...chasing me any longer?

SOSTR. No, he isn't.

PYRRH. I thought he was.

SOSTR. What are you talking about?

PYRRH. Please, let's get away from here.

SOSTR. Where to?

PYRRH. As far away from that door there (he points to Knemon's door) as we possibly can. He's a son of grief, a madman, a raving lunatic, that fellow you sent me to see, who lives there. Herakles! It's awful. I've broken practically all my toes with tripping over these rocks.

Act One

SOSTR. (to CHAIREAS) This fellow's acting as if he's drunk, it's plain to see.

PYRRH. (thinking that the last remark was a reference to Knemon, not to himself) Yes, he's quite out of his mind. But Sostratos, I'll be murdered. We've got to be careful. But I can't get my breath to speak. It's sticking in my throat... Well, I knocked at the door of that house. A miserable old hag came out. I said I was looking for the owner. She pointed him out 100 to me from here, where I'm standing now as I tell you this. He was mucking about, gathering pears on the hilltop, or collecting faggots.

SOSTR. Temper, temper!

PYRRH. What's that, sir? Well, I climbed onto his land and started walking up to him. Now I wanted to make the right impression on him from a long way off, you know, I wanted to look like a friendly sort of chap. So I gave him a shout and said, "I've come to see you, sir", I said, "there's a matter I want to see you about, it concerns you". But he came back at me right away, with "You damnable blackguard you, why the hell are you trespassing on my land?", and he picked up a lump of earth and threw it right into my face.

CHAIR. Good heavens!

PYRRH. Well, while I had my eyes closed and my mouth open - I was going to tell him where to go - well, he picked up a stick again, and he began to clean the bark off it, and he shouted "What business have you got with me, eh? Don't you know the public way?" He was screaming away at the top of his voice.

CHAIR. This farmer sounds absolutely insane.

PYRRH. Well, in the end I ran for it, and he's chased me nearly a couple of miles, first round the hill, and then down here into the wood, slinging sods and rocks at me, and his pears too, he hadn't got anything else. It's a barbarous sort of business, he's a perfectly murderous old man. I do beg you, get out of here.

SOSTR. That's cowardice.

PYRRH. But you don't realise what sort of trouble this is. He'll eat us alive!

Act One

CHAIR. Perhaps he's a bit upset now. I really think we ought to put our visit off for the present. You know, Sostratos, there's nothing so effective, whatever you're doing, as tact.

PYRRH. That's sensible, now.

CHAIR. A poor farmer's inclined to be rather touchy. It's not just him alone, they're practically all like that. Now tomorrow, I'll go and see him myself, first thing, I know where he lives. And you go home and wait (he is addressing SOSTRATOS). This'll turn out just as we want it.

PYRRH. Yes, let's do that (exit CHAIREAS).

SOSTR. He was glad enough to have an excuse for leaving as soon as he could. Obviously he didn't like the idea of walking here with me, he didn't think much of my keenness in wanting to get married. But as for you my boy, damn you for your stupidity!

PYRRH. But what have I done wrong, Sostratos?

SOSTR. You trespassed on his property, that's clear enough.

PYRRH. But I wasn't stealing anything.

SOSTR. Now would anyone be after your hide if you weren't doing anything wrong?

PYRRH. Oh, look, he's coming now.

SOSTR. Now, my dear boy, you can go up to him first.

PYRRH. No, you talk to him.

SOSTR. I couldn't. I'm not very good at conversation. I couldn't convince anybody. (KNEMON now enters, with purposeful gait, ignoring all in his path and muttering to himself.)

PYRRH. Well, what's your opinion of him now?

(PYRRHIAS here backs into the temple, remaining visible to the audience, but hiding himself from KNEMON.)

SOSTR. No, he doesn't seem to have a very friendly look on his face. Heavens, he is in a hurry! I think I'll stand a little way out of his path, away from his door. That's better. Why, he's yelling at the top of his voice, and he's all by himself. I don't think he can be in his right mind. 150

Act One

KNEMON That fellow Perseus was a lucky chap, in two ways. He had a pair of wings, so he didn't have to meet any pedestrians walking about on the ground. And second, he had a contraption that turned everybody who irritated him into stone. I wish I had something like that now. There'd be no shortage of stone statues around here then. (He gazes intently at the audience) But as it is, life's just not worth living. People come chattering and trespassing on your property nowadays. Yes, you know, I once used to spend my time working by the side of the road. But I don't do that any longer; I've given up cultivating all that part of my land that touches the road. I've left it because of the people who are always passing. But now they chase me right up to the hilltops. Oh, there's far too many people in this world, far too many people. Oh no! Who's that standing by my door?

SOSTR. Is he going to give me a hiding?

KNEMON (He ignores the words of SOSTRATOS) A man can't find a quiet place anywhere, no, not even if he wants to hang himself.

SOSTR. He's vexed with me. (To KNEMON) Oh, sir, I'm waiting for somebody here, I arranged to meet him.

KNEMON Didn't I just say so? You all think this is a park or a public place. Well then, if you want to meet anybody near my door, why don't you get it all organised just as you like? Go on, put up a bench to sit on, if you want. No, build a whole stadium! It's an absolute scandal, this disgusting behaviour, as if I haven't got enough to be worried about! (Exit into his house, slamming the door.)

SOSTR. This affair is going to require some extra-specially hard work, I think; obviously it needs a bit more initiative. Now I wonder, shall I go and see father's servant? Yes, I will: Getas is just the man. He's got a lively brain, and he's well up in all sorts of things. He'll get rid of that fellow's crabby temper, I know. I'm all against delay in this affair; a lot could happen in one day. But someone's unlatched the door.

(Knemon's DAUGHTER enters from her father's house, carrying a pitcher.)

DAUGHTER Oh dear, dear me, how awful things are! What am I going to do now? Nurse has dropped the big water jar into the well as she was drawing it up....

Act One

SOSTR. (aside) O father Zeus, O healer Apollo, O dear Castor and Pollux, what irresistible beauty!

DAUGHTER ...and when Daddy went out, he told us to get some hot water ready for him...

SOSTR. (aside) My dear fellows, she's beautiful!

DAUGHTER ...and if he finds out he'll beat the life out of her. Oh dear, I haven't much time. I know, my darling nymphs: I think I'll get the water from your shrine. But still, I'm rather frightened of disturbing anybody inside, there may be some people sacrificing.

SOSTR. Er, if you're willing to let me have the jar, I'll dip it in and bring it back to you.

DAUGHTER (making up her mind suddenly, after a doubtful pause.) Yes, certainly you may, but you'd better hurry. (She hands him the jar.)

SOSTR. (entering the shrine, and in an aside) She may have been brought up on a farm, but she certainly knows how to behave!

DAUGHTER Oh, I wish I knew how we could get out of this mess. Oh dear, the door. Surely it's not Daddy coming out? He'll give me a good spanking if he finds me outside.

(DAOS enters from Gorgias' house, and addresses his first words to someone in the house.)

DAOS I've spent a long time here, madam, looking after your needs, and master's been all by himself working on the farm. It's time I went and joined him. Oh, damn this poverty of ours. Poverty. Why did we have to be so poor? Why did Lady Have-Nowt have to choose our house for her permanent residence, year in, year out?

SOSTR. (bringing back the full jar, and now accompanied by PYRRHIAS) Here you are.

DAUGHTER Let me have it here.

DAOS (aside, and suspicious) Whatever does this fellow want?

SOSTR. Good-bye, and look after your father. (Exit DAUGHTER into her father's house.) Oh, I do feel terrible.

Act One

PYRRH. Stop moaning, Sostratos, it'll be all right.

SOSTR. What'll be all right?

PYRRH. Cheer up, do what you were going to do just now, find Getas and tell him all about it properly, and then you can come back here.

(Exeunt SOSTRATOS and PYRRHIAS, left.)

DAOS What's going on here? I don't like it one little bit, a young man fetching and carrying for a girl, it's wrong. Damn you, Knemon, damn you for the villain you are, leaving a poor girl that wouldn't harm a fly all alone here in a wilderness, and not a single person to look after her if anything happened. You might as well leave her out on a mountain top. I bet that young toff found out about it and was here in a flash. Thought it was a lucky strike, I'll warrant. Still, I'd better be quick and tell her stepbrother about this, and then we might be able to see that the girl's properly looked after. I think I'll go and do that now. Why, here's the local choir on its rounds. They look a bit 232 drunk, I think it'd be as well to keep out of their way (Exit right).

(The local choir (in the original Greek, a revelling chorus of votaries of Pan or Apollo, young men garlanded and carrying lit torches, and rather tipsy) enter, and entertain the audience with an entr'acte.)

ACT TWO

(GORGIAS and DAOS enter from the right, in the middle of an animated conversation. GORGIAS is a poor young man, dressed in a leather jerkin like DAOS: the ordinary dress of a farm labourer. DAOS carries a dikella: a tool that could be used equally well for digging and for forking.)

GORGIAS D'you mean to tell me that you considered the matter so trivial and unimportant, the way you acted?

Act Two

DAOS How do you mean?

GORG. By Zeus, you ought to have had a good look at this fellow who was molesting the girl. I don't care who he was, you ought to have told him no-one was going to let him get away with doing that in future. As it is, you just kept out of the business as if it didn't concern you. You can't ignore the ties of blood, Daos, when it's your sister that's concerned. Just because her father won't have anything to do with us, there's no reason for us to imitate his peevish ways. If she got into trouble, the shame would affect me, just as much. You know, other people don't know about who's responsible for the trouble in this sort of affair, they only see what's happened. So we'd better keep our eyes open.

DAOS But I'm scared of the old man, Gorgias. If he sees me going anywhere near his door, he'll have me hanged, drawn and quartered, straight away.

GORG. Yes, I suppose he's a difficult fellow with all his quarrelling. I just don't know how you'd force him to turn over a new 250 leaf - and you'd never alter him with advice. Besides, he's got the law on his side, to stop us forcing him, and his character's enough to stop us persuading him.

DAOS Just a minute. We have'nt come here for nothing, after all, but just as I told you, that fellow's coming back again.

GORG. (looking off-stage, left) You mean him with that fine woollen cloak on?

DAOS That's right.

GORG. You can tell he's a bad one from his looks.

(SOSTRATOS now enters left).

SOSTRATOS (addressing the audience) I found Getas wasn't in at home. Mother was going to sacrifice to some god or other, I don't know who: she's always doing it. She goes round the whole village, sacrificing this, sacrificing that. Anyway, she's sent Getas out to hire a cook for the ceremony. So I said a sweet farewell to the sacrifice, and here I am, back again on the job. I think I'll cut out all these long walks, and do my own talking for myself. I'll knock at the old man's door, and then I won't be able to think about it any'longer.

Act Two

(SOSTRATOS is about to knock on Knemon's door, when GORGIAS taps him on the shoulder.)

GORG. Excuse me, young man, I wonder if you'd be so kind as to listen patiently to rather a serious talk from me?

SOSTR. (surprised) Why, of course, I'd love to; go straight ahead.

GORG. I think that everybody, both people who are well off, and those that aren't, have a sort of limit, a sort of turning point in their fortunes. Now take the man who's well off: his affairs go on prospering all the time that he's able to carry his good luck sensibly, without doing anything wicked and sinful. But when he gets overloaded with his riches, and is goaded on to wickedness, that's the time he takes his change for the worse, I imagine. It's the same with people who don't have enough to make ends meet. Provided their poverty doesn't make them do anything wrong, and they bear their misfortune manfully, the time will come when they've proved their reliability, and there'll be better times ahead for them to look forward to. So what I say is this. If you're blessed with plenty of money, don't be too confident about it, and don't look down upon poor working people like us, either. If you want to keep that silver spoon in your mouth, let everybody see that you deserve it.

SOSTR. (after the lecture, even more mystified) But what am I doing that's so, well, out of place?

GORG. As far as I can see, you've set your heart on doing something vile, thinking you can persuade a free young girl to do wrong, or watching out for a chance to do something you deserve to be executed for many times over, yes, executed!

SOSTR. (dazed) Apollo!

GORG. It isn't right that folks with your leisure should become a wicked torment to hard-working people like us. But I'd have you know, when a poor man's been done an injury, he's the most relentless and implacable enemy of all. He may be a pitiful sight to begin with, but in the end he won't consider all he's suffered merely as an injustice, he'll take it as a personal affront.

SOSTR. Young man, I'm sure I don't want anything to happen to you, but please listen to me for a moment.

Act Two

DAOS (speaking at the same time as SOSTRATOS, above) Well done master, good luck to you.

SOSTR. Yes, and you too, who just spoke, you pay attention, too. I saw a young lady here, and I've fallen in love with her. If that's a crime, well then, perhaps I've committed a crime, I can't deny it. Anyway, I've not walked here to see her, it's her father I want to see. I'm a free man, and I've a reasonable income. I'm quite prepared to marry her without any dowry, and I give you my solemn promise to go on cherishing her. But as for coming here with evil motives, or with the intention of doing some dark deeds unknown to you, well, young man, I hope the god Pan and these nymphs by his side will strike me raving mad here on the spot by their shrine, if I've done what you say. And let me tell you, I'm extremely upset, if that's the sort of person you think me.

GORG. (confused) Well, if I have as a matter of fact said anything a little bit too hasty, I hope you won't take it to heart now. You've quite changed my opinion of you, I'm willing to be your friend. But you see, I'm not an outsider, I'm the girl's half-brother, and that's why I took it upon myself to speak to you.

SOSTR. Yes, and by heaven you'll be able to help me in what I've still got to do!

GORG. How d'you mean, help you?

SOSTR. Well, I can see you're a generous fellow.....

GORG. Look, it's not that I want to get rid of you with a few empty excuses, but I should like to point out the facts of the situation here. This girl's father isn't like any other person. In fact, there's nobody like him today, and there never has been.

SOSTR. You mean this difficult fellow? I think I know about that.

GORG. No, the trouble's a great deal worse than that. This fellow's got property worth perhaps ten thousand pounds, yet he does all his own labouring on the farm, all by himself; he hasn't got any man to help him - he's got no servants at home, no hired help from the village, no neighbours. He just keeps to himself. His greatest pleasure is in seeing nobody. He goes out to work usually just with his daughter, she's the only person he talks to, and nobody else could make him do that easily. And he says he'll only marry her off when he finds a man for her with a character modelled on his own.

Act Two

SOSTR. That means never.

GORG. So, my good friend, don't trouble yourself with him. You'll only be wasting your time. Just leave us to put up with him; we've got to, we're his relations, as luck would have it.

SOSTR. But, young man, I'll swear you have never been in love.

GORG. Can't, my good friend.

SOSTR. Why, what's to stop you?

GORG. What's to stop me? Simple arithmetic - counting up all our troubles. That never gives us a rest.

SOSTR. You know, I think you're just a little bit naive about this. But you're not still advising me to keep away from the girl, are you? If you are, let me tell you, the matter doesn't rest in my hands now, but in the hands of God.

GORG. Well, you're doing no harm to us: it's just that you'll be piling up a load of misery for yourself, all to no purpose.

SOSTR. Have you no idea how I might win the girl, then?

GORG. You'd never win her. But you'll see what I mean, if you 350 come with me. Then you can find out the truth from old Knemon in person. You see, he's working at the moment in the valley near us.

SOSTR. But how will I found out?

GORG. I'll get into conversation with him, about getting his girl married. You see, the old man would never willingly give his consent to anything like this. He'd fight the whole world first, he'd denounce the sort of lives people lead, and when he sees you, with your fine clothes and your soft life, why, he won't consent even to look at you.

SOSTR. But is he there now?

GORG. No, he isn't; but if you wait a bit, he'll come out and go the way he usually goes.

SOSTR. Heavens! And you said he'd have the girl with him, didn't you? And to get a chance of that happening, I don't care how, I'm ready to walk just where you say. But please, do help me.

Act Two

GORG. How?

SOSTR. How? By taking me where you said.

DAOS What? You mean you intend to stand by us, watching us working, with that cloak on your shoulders?

SOSTR. Well, why not?

DAOS Why not? I'll tell you why not. He'll pelt you with lumps of earth and he'll call you a lazy good-for-nothing at the very first sight of you. No, you'd better come digging with us. If he happened to see you then, he might be willing to consider listening even to you, if he thought you were a poor labourer.

SOSTR. I'm quite prepared to follow anything you say, so lead on.

GORG. But why must you force yourself into all this wretched back-breaking work?

DAOS (aside) I want us to get all the work done that we can today - and I want him to break his back at the same time. Then he'll stop coming here and pestering us.

SOSTR. Let me have a fork or a spade, then.

DAOS Take mine, and be off with you. (After handing over his dikella to SOSTRATOS, he turns to GORGIAS) Meanwhile, I'll be getting on with that dry-stone walling; that's got to be done, too.

SOSTR. (as DAOS offers the dikella) Give it me, then.

DAOS I've saved your bacon. Come along, then, master, you can follow me there later.

(Exit DAOS, right; GORGIAS and SOSTRATOS prepare to follow him. SOSTRATOS takes off his woollen cloak, and dons a leather jerkin, which GORGIAS produces from his house.)

SOSTR. (as he removes the cloak) Well, that's how it is. If I can't live with the girl as my wife, I don't want to live at all.

GORG. If you really mean what you say, good luck to you.

Act Two

SOSTR. (putting on his jerkin) You gods in heaven! You know, Gorgias, you thought you were putting me off by all those arguments you used, but in fact you've made me twice as eager for the job in hand ... I mean, this girl ... if she hasn't been brought up in the middle of a lot of women, and if she hasn't been told terrible stories by an aunt or a nurse about all the wicked things that go on in life ... and if instead she's been brought up in a free or open sort of way, with a savage brute of a father who loathes everything that's wrong - well then, isn't it just the most marvellous thing in the world to win her for my wife? But this fork weighs about two tons, it'll kill me. Still, we mustn't be soft, once we've started labouring at this business.

(Exeunt GORGIAS and SOSTRATOS, after DAOS. The stage is now empty and silent for a few seconds. Then confused noises are heard off-stage, left. These become gradually louder, finally resolving into the bleating of a lamb, the rattling of pots and pans, and human oaths and curses. At length, the cook SIKON enters, wearing an apron and carrying a murderous-looking butcher's knife, and dragging behind him a very reluctant sheep.)

SIKON This blasted sheep isn't any of your ordinary nice sheep. Oh damn, damn you, you blasted thing, you. If I pick you up and carry you on my shoulders, you start biting at the shoots on the twigs, and eating the leaves, and tearing them off with all your little strength. And if I drop you to the ground, you just refuse to budge. So here am I, a fully-qualified cook, dragging you along the ground, like a fellow dragging a boat over rollers; it cuts me to the quick, it does. But thank God, here's the shrine where we're going to sacrifice. (mumbling) O Pan, great god, I give thee greeting. (looking back over his shoulder, off-left, where the rattling noises and the cursing continue, louder) Getas, my boy, are you so far behind?

(SIKON ties up the lamb to the shrine; meanwhile GETAS enters, carrying on his back an enormous pack, with pots, pans, rugs, cushions and mattresses visible.)

GETAS Those damned women, curse 'em, have loaded on my back enough stuff for four donkeys to carry.

SIKON (giving no help) There must be a lot of people coming. My God, what a fantastic number of rugs you're carrying!

GETAS (struggling to get the load off his back) What about...helping me?

Act Two

SIKON (pitying, but quite unwilling to give any physical help)
Now just prop them up against there (pointing to the temple wal').

GETAS There, now. And if the next dream is of Pan of Paiania, we'll be off there to sacrifice straight away, crossing a couple of mountains into the bargain, I know.

SIKON Just a minute, this dream, who had it?

GETAS Oh, don't bother me.

SIKON Come on, Getas, tell me who it was, who saw the dream?

GETAS Mistress.

SIKON What did she see, eh?

GETAS Oh, you'll kill me yet. She thought she saw Pan.

SIKON Not this Pan here? (pointing to a statue of Pan, outside the temple).

GETAS Yes, this one. He was ...

SIKON What was he doing?

GETAS Oh, you know our young master, Sostratos?

SIKON Oh yes, he's a really charming young man!

GETAS Well, Pan was fastening chains on his legs.

SIKON You don't say!

GETAS Then he gave him a leather jerkin and a spade, and told him to start digging, in the farm next door to here.

SIKON Good gracious, that's a strange story!

GETAS And that's why we're sacrificing now. It's to make this awful thing turn out all right.

SIKON I see. Oh well, pick up your bundle again and carry it inside. We've got to get the mattresses sorted out and everything else ready. I don't want any hitches with the sacrificing when they arrive, I want it all to go nicely and receive the bless-

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ing of the gods. Oh, you miserable fellow, stop scowling, can't you? I'll give you a nice feed today. (Exit SIKON into the shrine, taking the sheep with him.)

GETAS (preparing to follow, loaded up again) Now I've always been one to praise you and your marvellous skill - but I don't 426 trust you an inch!

(GETAS follows SIKON into the shrine. There is now an entr'acte by the 'local choir'.)

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(KNEMON'S door opens, and the old man appears, carrying a spade; his first words are addressed back to somebody inside the house. Consequently, he does not at first see the large party of people who now enter from off-left and make their way into the shrine. These are the guests, relations and servants of Sostratos' mother, coming to the sacrifice. They are making a great din, with singing and flute-playing. Among the crowd are Sostratos' mother, his sister, a flute-girl called Parthenis, playing the traditional double-flute, and another girl, probably a servant, named Plangon. This crowd reaches and envelops KNEMON just at the end of his first speech.)

KNEMON Old woman, just close the door and don't open it to anybody till I get back. That'll be pretty late tonight, after dark, I expect.

(GETAS enters from the shrine, to meet the sacrificers.)

GETAS Oh, Plangon, come on, walk a bit faster; we ought to have sacrificed hours ago.

KNEMON What the hell's going on here? There are thousands of people! (He gets entangled in the crowd) Oh, damn them.

GETAS Now play your flute in honour of Pan, Parthenis. They say you mustn't approach this god in silence.

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(SIKON now appears from the shrine, in full cook's dress. He can barely conceal his impatience at the throng's late arrival.)

SIKON So you've got here at last, have you? (aside) My God, it's absolutely disgusting. We've been waiting all this time, sitting down doing nothing.

GETAS We've got everything ready.

SIKON By Zeus we have, the sheep's half dead already with waiting.

GETAS Poor little thing, it's not going to wait for your lazy hands. (GETAS turns to the party, now entering the shrine) In you all go. Now you get the sprinkling baskets ready, you the holy water, and you the sacrificial cakes and incense. (Exeunt all the party and SIKON into the shrine, leaving GETAS at the door and KNEMON gazing angrily at their vanishing backs). And what are you gaping at, you moonstruck baboon? (Exit GETAS into the shrine).

KNEMON To the devil with all of you. (He turns to the audience) They stop me doing any work. I can't leave my house unattended for a minute. These nymphs are a damned nuisance. It'd be a good idea to take down my house and build another one as far away from here as I can. When these thieving rogues sacrifice, they bring their boxes and their bottles not to serve the gods but to serve themselves. Their religion extends as far as the incense 150 and the sacrificial cakes, that's all, the gods do get that, once it's been put on the fire. But as for the rest, well, it's the end of the backbone and the guts that they set aside for the gods - just because they can't eat it themselves. And all the rest they swill down like pigs. (KNEMON returns to his house, and knocks.) Old woman, open the door, quick. I'll have to see to things inside the house, it seems. (The door is opened, and exit KNEMON into his house.)

(Enter GETAS, backwards, from the shrine, speaking back inside to SIKON.)

GETAS So you say you've forgotten to bring the boiling-pot? The trouble is, you're all suffering from hangovers, that's what it is. Well, what are we going to do now? It looks like we'll have to trouble these people who live next door to the shrine. (GETAS moves to Knemon's house, and starts to knock on his door. His following words consist of shouts for someone to answer the door,

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punctuated by muttered comments. The shouts become gradually louder) Servant! - I don't think there's a more miserable crowd of servant-women than those we have - Servant! - they have no idea how to do anything, except when they're alone in the dark - I say, are there any servants about? - yes, and telling tales if anybody sees them doing it. - Servant! - What the hell's the matter here? - Servants! - Isn't there anybody in? Ah, here's somebody coming at last, it seems! (The door is unbarred, and KNEMON appears, in a rage.)

KNEMON What the hell are you holding on to the door for, you miserable scoundrel?

GETAS Don't snap, sir.

KNEMON By god, that I will, and I'll eat you up alive.

GETAS No, no, in heaven's name (Backing away at this onslaught).

KNEMON You unholy rogue, I haven't hired you to come and cook for me.

GETAS No you haven't, and I've not come for that and I've not come to force you to pay any debts and I haven't come to bring you a summons. All I want to do is to borrow a boiling-pot.

KNEMON A boiling-pot?

GETAS A boiling-pot.

KNEMON You blackguard, do you think I'm in the habit of sacrificing oxen and doing the sort of things your lot do?

GETAS No, you wouldn't sacrifice anything bigger than a snail. But good-bye, my good fellow. (As he leaves Knemon's door) The women told me to knock on your door and ask. I've done that. You haven't got one. Well, I'll go back and tell them. (aside, as he re-enters the shrine) That fellow's a grizzly old viper. (Exit GETAS.)

KNEMON They're as bad as man-eating tigers. They come straight for our doors as if they knew us. If I get any of them coming to the door again, and if I fail to make an example of them before the whole village, you can start calling me the worst name in the world: you can start calling me an ordinary man. But I don't know how that fellow got away so nicely, whoever he was. (Exit back into the house, slamming the door. As

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it slams, SIKON swaggers out from the shrine, speaking contemptuously back to GETAS inside.)

SIKON Damn it all, perhaps he did insult you. But did you really ask, you old garbage-collector? (SIKON approaches Knemon's door confidently) People just don't know how to do this sort of thing. Now I've invented the science of borrowing. I've served thousands and thousands of people in the city, and I'm always pestering neighbours and borrowing pots and pans from everybody. You see, the intending borrower has got to be a bit of a flatterer. Suppose an oldish fellow answers the door, my first words to him are 'Dear old chap', or 'Dad'. If it's an old hag, then it's 'Mother'. If it's a servant, it's 'There's a good fellow', or 'Be a dear'. And then I can twist the whole lot of you round my little finger. Poor, stupid dears. (SIKON knocks on Knemon's door) Servant! Servant, I say! (As KNEMON opens it, SIKON changes the tone of his voice) It's me. Ah, what a charming old man. I say, grandad...

KNEMON You again!

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SIKON Yes, it's the same old thing again.

KNEMON You're just trying to irritate me on purpose. Haven't I told you not to come near this door? (He turns to shout inside his house) Old woman, my whip! (He seizes SIKON, takes the whip, and starts to belabour him.)

SIKON Oh no, let me go!

KNEMON "Let me go", my good man?

SIKON Yes, in heaven's name! (he breaks free.)

KNEMON Come back.

SIKON I wish Poseidon would bl...

KNEMON Still chattering, eh?

SIKON I only came to borrow a cooking-pot.

KNEMON I have not got a cooking pot, or an axe, or salt, or vinegar, or anything else; but I tell you once and for all, I am not having any of you from this village coming near my door.

SIKON You've never told me that.

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KNEMON Well, I do now.

SIKON Yes, and much good may it do you. But please, couldn't you just tell me where I can go and get a pot from?

KNEMON Didn't I tell you? Are you still going to go on jabbering? (He threatens SIKON again. SIKON backs away to the doorway of the shrine.)

SIKON Good-bye.

KNEMON I want no good-byes from the likes of you.

SIKON Well, bad-bye, then.

KNEMON (turning to go back into his house) Trouble, trouble, trouble, and nothing you can do about it. (Exit KNEMON.)

SIKON Well, he's messed me up nicely.

(GETAS pops his head through the entrance to the shrine.)

GETAS Yes, how important it is to ask properly! It makes all the difference, doesn't it? (SIKON aims a blow at him, and GETAS disappears back into the shrine.)

SIKON Shall we try another door? But if they're so ready with their fists in this area, it's going to be difficult. Perhaps it'll be best to roast all the meat instead. Yes, that seems like it. I've got a roasting-tin. So I say good riddance to the people of Phyle. I'll use my own batterie de cuisine. (Exit into the shrine. As he disappears, SOSTRATOS limps in from the right, carrying his jerkin over his arm.)

SOSTRATOS If anyone's short of troubles, he ought to come to Phyle for the hunting. I'm just a mass of aches and pains, my back, my ribs, my neck, the whole of my body. You see, I went to work with a will, vigorously, as you'd expect of a young man. I lifted my fork up high, just like a labourer, and then brought it down hard into the ground, pretty keenly. But not for long. Then I began changing my position a little bit, and started wondering when the old man would appear, with his daughter. And I felt my back as I bent down, not letting the others see me; phew, I never realised how slowly time could pass! And I tried to straighten myself again. Do you know, I was as stiff as a board! And it was all quiet, nobody ever came. The sun was burning down, and Gorgias looked up and saw me popping up and

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down like a see-saw, up - oh! (he exclaims with pain as he straightens himself) - and down, with the whole weight of my body in it. So Gorgias says, "I don't think he's going to come today, young man". "What shall we do, then?", I said. "We'll look out for him again tomorrow, we'll leave it for today", he said. And up came Daos to take my place with the digging. So that's the way the first assault has turned out. I can't really explain my reasons for coming here; it's as if the adventure were drawing me to this spot, with a mysterious, unaccountable power.

(GETAS suddenly bursts out of the shrine, shouting back at SIKON inside.)

GETAS Do you think I've got thirty pairs of hands, man? Here I am, lighting the fire for you, washing the offal, chopping up the liver and the kidneys, all at the same time. I'm kneading the dough, I'm running round everywhere, carrying this and 550 that for you, and the result is that I'm blinded by all the smoke. You'd think the whole blessed festival depended on me alone.

SOSTR. I say, Getas.

GETAS (fiddling about in front of the shrine, with his back to SOSTRATOS) Who wants me?

SOSTR. It's me.

GETAS (still fiddling) Who are you?

SOSTR. Can't you see?

GETAS (finally turning, and becoming polite as he recognises SOSTRATOS) Oh, I see now, it's the young master.

SOSTR. What are you all doing here?

GETAS If you really want to know, we've just sacrificed, and we're getting your luncheon ready.

SOSTR. Is mother here?

GETAS She's been here ages.

SOSTR. And father?

GETAS We're waiting for him. But come on in.

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SOSTR. I'll just run along here a little way first (pointing in the direction from which he has recently come). In a way, this sacrifice is very opportune. I'll go just as I am, and invite that young man and his servant, too. If they've taken part in our private prayers and our meal, they'll be more inclined to fight efficiently on my side in the future, er, for my marriage.

GETAS What's that? You're off to invite some more guests to lunch? As far as I'm concerned, you can bring three thousand more. Past experience has taught me that I shan't taste anything of it. That's impossible. The lot of you can go and collect all your guests, for it's a lovely animal that you've sacrificed, a real joy to see. But those women: they're oh, so charming, such good manners, they wouldn't give a man so much as a share in a pinch of salt, by Demeter they wouldn't!

SOSTR. It'll be all right today, though, Getas. That's my prophecy, and I call on Pan to witness it. I never forget to pray to Pan as I go past, and I'll be generous to you today, Getas. (Exeunt GETAS and SOSTRATOS, the former into the shrine, the latter off-right, in Gorgias' direction. Just afterwards, Knemon's door opens, and out bursts SIMIKE, all a-flutter.)

SIMIKE Oh dear me, oh dear me, oh dear me!

(GETAS emerges again from the shrine at this sudden wailing.)

GETAS Oh, go to the devil! (aside) It's a woman who's come out; she belongs to that old man, I suppose.

SIM. Oh, what's going to happen to me? The old man wanted the water jar which is in the well, and I was trying to get it out without his knowing, and I fastened a fork to a rotten old rope, and it was no good and it's just broken in two on me!

GETAS Splendid!

SIM. And I've dropped the fork into the well now along with the water jar, and - oh, oh, oh ...

GETAS Well, all you've got to do now is to throw yourself in!

SIM. And the old man wants to shift some manure that's lying about, and he's been running round looking for the fork, and he's bawling his head off, and oh dear, there's the door, it's him! (Knemon's door is being unfastened.)

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GETAS You'd better run for it, you miserable hag; he'll murder you, old woman, so fight him, fight him!

(As SIMIKE cowers, KNEMON enters from his house.)

KNEMON Where's the thieving witch?

SIM. O master, I didn't mean to drop it in the well...

KNEMON Get inside!

SIM. What are you going to do with me, tell me?

KNEMON What am I going to do? I'm going to fasten you to the rope, and let you down on it.

SIM. Oh no, please, not that, it's too hard!

KNEMON Yes, and what's more, I'll use the very same rope.

GETAS Oh good, and I hope the rope's absolutely rotten!

SIM. (going to Gorgias' door, and knocking on it) Daos, Daos, come out, I want you.

KNEMON So you want Daos, do you? That's enough of your unholy bawling. Haven't I told you? Get inside, woman, and be quick about it! (SIMIKE re-enters Knemon's house.) How miserable loneliness can be, sometimes. I feel more lonely than anybody in the whole, wide world. Still, I suppose I'd better go down the well myself, there's nothing else for it.

GETAS Look here, we'll let you have a bucket and a rope.

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KNEMON (savagely) God damn you, if you speak to me! (KNEMON re-enters his house angrily, slamming the door, and leaving GETAS dumbfounded.)

GETAS He's stamped back inside in a violent temper! Miserable fellow, what a life he must lead! There's your Athenian farmer, in a nutshell. Just look at him: fighting against a stony soil that produces nothing but sage and wild-thyme, getting a degree in aches and pains, and what does he get back from the land? Not a single decent crop. But anyway, here's the young master back, with those people he's invited. My God, this is funny! They're workmen, labourers from the village. What's he

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bringing them here for? How on earth has he got to know people like that? (Exit into the shrine. A moment later, SOSTRATOS and GORGIAS enter, in the middle of a conversation; DAOS follows them, carrying the dikella and Sostratos' jerkin.)

SOSTR. But I shouldn't think of letting you refuse...

GORGIAS It's very kind of you, but we can manage.

SOSTR. But whoever heard of anybody refusing point-blank an invitation to luncheon, after his friend had sacrificed? You know, I've really been your friend for a long time, even before I saw you!

GORG. I could never leave my mother at home by herself.

SOSTR. Well then, attend to all she requires, and I'll join you 619 before very long. (GORGIAS enters his own house with DAOS, SOSTRATOS goes into the shrine. Entr'acte as before.)

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(Enter SIMIKE, in great distress.)

SIMIKE Help, help, oh dear me, help, help, who'll help me?

(SIKON rushes out from the shrine.)

SIKON Holy Herakles, let's get on with our libations, by all the gods! You insult us, you beat us, you scream to high heaven. I've never seen a house like it.

SIM. Master's in the well!

SIKON How did that happen?

SIM. How? He tried to climb down to get the water jar and the pitchfork, and then he slipped from the top, and he's fallen right in. (She is weeping and wailing copiously.)

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SIKON Now isn't this the very best thing that he's ever done, the crabby old devil? By the heavens, it's wonderful! And now, my dear old woman, there's a job for you to do.

SIM. What's that?

SIKON Get a nice big stone, a millstone or something of that nature, and drop it in from on top.

SIM. Oh please go down.

SIKON Poseidon, do you want me to suffer the fate of what's-his-name in that old story - you know - fight the dog in the well? Not on your life!

SIM. (knocking on Gorgias' door) Oh Gorgias, Gorgias, where are you, Gorgias?

(GORGIAS rushes out from his house, in the middle of his meal.)

GORGIAS Who's calling me? What's the trouble, Simike?

SIM. What's the trouble? I tell you again, master's in the well!

GORG. (going to the entrance of the shrine, and calling inside)
Sostratos, come out here! (SOSTRATOS appears hurriedly: GORGIAS whispers to him, and then addresses SIMIKE aloud)
Inside quickly, you lead the way! (The two young men follow SIMIKE into Knemon's house, leaving SIKON alone on the stage. He has been an amused spectator of the recent bustle.)

SIKON By Dionysus, the gods do exist, after all! So you don't let people borrow a boiling-pot from you when they want to sacrifice, you old rogue, you want to keep them all to yourself. Well, now that you've fallen in, you can drink up all your beastly well, and then you won't have any water left to give to anybody who needs it. Today the nymphs have given me my revenge, and quite rightly, too. Nobody ever did an injury to a cook and got away with it. Our profession must be a sacred one, I suppose - but you can do what you like to a waiter.

KNEMON'S DAUGHTER (crying from within Knemon's house) Oh Daddy, darling Daddy! He's not dead, tell me he's not dead!

SIKON Well, I never, there's somebody crying her eyes out for him. That's [something that I] never [would have

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expected. Crying for that crabby old rascal!

DAUGHTER (from within) Oh darling Daddy, you're safe after all, they've got you out safe.

SIKON Worse luck! They must have found another rope, and somebody must have gone down on it. Still, there's one consolation - he's bound to be half-dead, that's] plain enough, [perhaps even three-quarters dead! I suppose they] must have pulled him up. [on the rope]. Just think! Won't the sight of him be a [glorious one], him being carried into the house quaking and trembling! It'll be a pretty sight! Ladies and gentlemen, I wish I could see that, I really do! (SIKON now turns to the shrine, and shouts his next words inside.) Ladies, do you hear? Pour libations, and pray that the old man's rescue be accompanied with the holy blessings of a broken leg and a permanent limp! That'd stop him being such a nuisance of a neighbour to the god of this shrine and the people who sacrifice here. That's an important consideration for the likes of me, if anybody wants to hire my services. (Exit into the shrine. Directly afterwards, SOSTRATOS runs breathless onto the stage from Knemon's house.)

SOSTRATOS Ladies and gentlemen, I swear by Demeter and Asklepios and all the gods in heaven, I've never seen a man so near suffocation, nor, for that matter, one who so deserved to be so near suffocation! Ah, what a heavenly time I've had! But I'd better tell you about it. As soon as we got inside the house, Gorgias jumped straight into the well, while the young lady and I - well, we just did nothing on top. Well, what could we do? We were willing. Only, of course, she was tearing her hair out, and crying, and beating her breast, as vigorously as she could. And I, the precious fathead, just stood by her side like a nurse, and asked her not to cry. I kept on asking her, with my eyes glued on her. She was as pretty as a picture, and I don't mean one of your tuppenny-ha'penny ones! Nobody paid less attention to the spliced rope than I did, with this vision beside me. What a bore it was to have to bother about pulling! In fact, I pretty nearly let him go. You see, I was gazing into her eyes, and that made me let the rope slip, oh, two or three times, I suppose. But there was Gorgias, a Mr. Atlas if anyone was, he held on tight, and he shoved and he shoved, and in the end he's hoisted him out. But it was a struggle. And when the old man emerged, I came straight out here. You see, I couldn't control myself any longer; I was practically going up to the girl and kissing her! That's how much I love her. So I've come

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out here, to prepare the . . . (At this moment, SOSTRATOS is distracted by the sound of Knemon's door opening.) Ah, now the doors are opening - oh, Zeus protect me, have you ever seen such a sight!

(From Knemon's house, GORGIAS now pushes onto the stage a couch, guided at its head by Knemon's DAUGHTER. On this couch lies KNEMON, a mass of bandages and with both legs in splints. His head lies at the end of the couch guided by his DAUGHTER. The couch is wheeled into the middle of the stage, so that KNEMON is fully visible to the audience. The DAUGHTER takes up her stand behind the couch, at KNEMON'S head, and GORGIAS stands by KNEMON'S feet. Meanwhile, SOSTRATOS has retired to the entrance of the shrine, at the back of the stage.)

GORGIAS Now tell me, Knemon, is there anything you want?

KNEMON What do I want? Oh, can't you see I'm badly hurt?

GORG. Oh, cheer up!

KNEMON When Knemon is dead and buried, he won't be such a nuisance to you in the future.

GORG. You see now the trouble that living by yourself causes. It pretty nearly finished you off, just now. At your time of life, you ought to have somebody looking after you.

KNEMON I know I'm a difficult old fogey. All right, Gorgias, call your mother. (GORGIAS goes into his own house, to fetch her.) It looks as if it's only troubles that can give us a proper 700 education. My dear, will you get hold of me, and help me to get on my feet? (This remark is addressed to his DAUGHTER, who helps him up, supporting him with one arm. His other arm is propped against the couch.)

SOSTRATOS (coming forward instinctively) Lucky fellow!

KNEMON What are you standing there for, you nincompoop? (SOSTRATOS hurriedly retires. At this moment, GORGIAS escorts his mother Myrrhine out of his house, brings her to KNEMON, and the two exchange polite greetings. Myrrhine then retires behind the couch. KNEMON clears his throat, to claim attention.)

KNEMON [Now you are all here - Gorgias, and my daughter,

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and you, too, Myrrhine, my old wife whom I married so many years ago. I've got you all together, because I may not have long to live, and there's something that] I wanted [to tell you. Now first, a few words for you,] Myrrhine and Gorgias.

[I want to explain to you why] I chose [my present mode of life. Now don't fidget and fret -] none of you's going to make me change it, you'll just have to put up with it. Perhaps I made one mistake, when I thought I was the one man in the whole, wide world who could be independent, who needed no assistance from anyone else. And now I've discovered that death can strike swiftly and without warning. I didn't realise that before. Everybody ought to have a man standing by, to help in case of an emergency.

You know, it was a violent moral shock to me, to see the way that people lived their lives, the petty calculations they made to ensure a petty profit. It made me think that there was no kindness from man to man on this earth. That was the barrier between myself and others. But one man, and one man alone - that's Gorgias here - has just about managed to prove me wrong, by an action that shows a truly noble character. I was the man who never let him come near my door, I never helped him in any way, I never talked to him, never said "Good morning", and yet, in spite of all this, he was decent enough to rescue me. He could have acted quite differently, he could have justified himself by saying: "You won't let me come near you; all right then, I'm not coming. You've never done anything for us; well, I won't do anything for you, either." So what's to be done about it? Well, young man, I may have a few more years to live, or I may die quite soon. Probably the latter: I may be pretty badly injured. But in either case, I make you my legal heir. Everything that I possess is yours. This daughter of mine I put in your care. Find her a husband, will you; for even if I recover again, I shan't be able to find anyone myself. Nobody will ever satisfy me. And just let me live in the way I desire. You take all the rest of my property, and act as you think fit. God willing, you're a sensible lad, and it's only natural that you should protect and care for your sister. Now split my estate into two halves. Reserve one half as her dowry, and take the other for yourself: you can look after your mother and myself with that.

Now, daughter, help me to lie down. (His DAUGHTER approaches him, and helps him back onto the couch while he speaks the following sentence.) I don't hold with people saying more than they need; but there is just one thing more, my child, that I'd like you to know. I just want to say a few things to you about life, and the way people behave. You know, if we

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were all kind to one another, there'd be no need for law courts, there'd be no arresting people and putting them into prison, and there would be no more war. Everyone would have his little bit, and be content. But maybe you like modern ways better? Well, live in that way, then! This difficult and bad-tempered old man will soon be out of the way.

GORG. Well, I'll take all this on. But we must find a husband for the girl as quickly as we can, one you'll agree to and can help us to find. Er, you, Sostratos... (He beckons to SOSTRATOS; the latter comes forward, but is halted by KNEMON'S outburst.)

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KNEMON I've told you all I had in my mind, so don't worry me, in heaven's name!

GORG. He wants to meet you.

KNEMON Never in this world!

GORG. But he's asking for your daughter.

KNEMON That's no concern of mine any more.

GORG. He helped to rescue you.

KNEMON (relenting a little) Who is he? (SOSTRATOS comes forward.)

GORG. Here.

KNEMON Come here. (SOSTRATOS approaches KNEMON, who examines him closely.) He's sunburnt. Is he a farmer?

SOSTR. Er, yes, sir, I am.

GORG. He isn't one of those precious toffs, who do nothing but stroll idly about town all day long, [and make a mockery of their claims to noble] birth.

KNEMON [Well, then, if you like, let him] marry the girl, and get the business [over with as quickly as you can. Now] push me back inside.

GORG. Good. (GORGIAS pushes KNEMON on his couch back into his house, and calls to SIMIKE inside as he does so.)

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[Simike,] look after him, will you? (GORGIAS closes Knemon's door, and returns to the others.)

SOSTR. [All that] remains [now is the formal betrothal ceremony.]

GORG. [But will your father confirm it, if I do this now?]

SOSTR. My father won't object.

GORG. (performing the ceremony of betrothal as he speaks) I betroth this woman to thee, and give her to thee before witnesses. You've acted like an honest man, Sostratos, in everything you've done. The way you've tackled this affair shows you're no hypocrite. You were straight. You were ready to go to any honourable lengths for the sake of your love. Your fine hands weren't used to hard work, but you took our tools, and you were willing to dig and work hard. It's that sort of thing which shows whether you're a man or not - that willingness to forget about all your money and put yourself on the same level as poor men like us. The man who can do that won't give way when the winds change and the weather's stormy. Well, Sostratos, you've proved your character to anybody's satisfaction: only make sure you stay like that.

SOSTR. Well, there's really more to me than that, but it's a trifle vulgar to indulge in self-praise, perhaps. But I can see my father coming, just at the right time.

GORG. Is Kallippides your father?

SOSTR. Why, yes.

GORG. Heavens, he's a rich old man!

SOSTR. He's an honest farmer, second to none!

(KALLIPPIDES now enters from the left, in a hurry.)

KALLIPPIDES (speaking to no-one in particular) I expect my wife will slay me. They must have eaten the lamb ages ago; they'll have gone off into the country by now.

GORG. Poseidon, he's got a sharp and hungry look on his face. Shall we tell him our news now?

SOSTR. No, let him eat first: that'll make him less savage!

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KALL. (noticing SOSTRATOS) What's this, Sostratos? Have you finished luncheon?

SOSTR. Yes, but as a matter of fact they have left some for you. You'd better go in.

KALL. I will. (He enters the shrine.)

GORG. (to SOSTRATOS) Now go in and talk to him, if you want to. You'll get your father all by himself (GORGIAS turns to go back into his own house and Myrrhine and Knemon's DAUGHTER follow him.)

SOSTR. Will you be waiting inside, then?

GORG. I don't think I shall be going out.

SOSTR. In a few minutes I'll come for you, then.

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(SOSTRATOS enters the shrine, and GORGIAS enters his own house along with Myrrhine and Knemon's DAUGHTER. When the stage is empty, the chorus perform an entr'acte as before.)

ACT FIVE

(SOSTRATOS and KALLIPPIDES emerge from the shrine, deep in argument.)

SOSTRATOS Father, you're not doing all that I wanted, or expected.

KALLIPPIDES How do you mean? Haven't I given my consent for you to marry the girl you love? I want you to marry her, I think you ought.

SOSTR. You haven't given your full consent. That's what I think, and that's what I say!

Act Five

KALL. Here's a newly-engaged fellow with a pretty determined mind, if love makes him want to do that.

SOSTR. But if I'm going to marry this young man's sister, because I think he's worthy of us, well, what reason have you for refusing to let my sister marry him in return?

KALL. That's a disgraceful idea. I'm not going to let both my son and my daughter marry paupers. One's quite enough for us.

SOSTR. All you talk about is money, money: a thing as volatile as a dragonfly's wing! I mean, if you know that you're going to have it for ever and ever, well then, guard it, don't give a 800 share to anybody. But if your title to the money isn't absolute, if you hold it only on lease from fortune, don't grudge it to any of these people. You know, one day fortune might come and take it all back from you, and then hand it over to somebody else, somebody who doesn't deserve it. That's why, in my opinion, father, you ought to use your money generously as long as you have it, to help everybody and to make as many people as you can prosperous and rich, all by your own efforts, in every way that you can. For that wins you an immortal name; and even if you should chance to stumble and go down, you might then get it back from the same place. You know, a visible friend is infinitely preferable to hidden wealth, that you keep buried in a secret place.

KALL. You know the kind of man I am, Sostratos. The fortune I've made for myself isn't going to be buried in my grave along with me. How could it be? It's all yours. So you've proved a man's worth, and you want to make him your friend! Well, go on, do that, I give you my blessing. You've no need to preach sermons at me; go to him, and open your purse. Be a benefactor, share out your money. Your sermon's completely converted me.

SOSTR. You're really willing?

KALL. Yes, I'm really willing, you can be sure. You've no need to be worried about that.

SOSTR. Then I'll get hold of Gorgias.

(GORGIAS appears from his house before SOSTRATOS has had time to knock on his door.)

Act Five

GORGIAS I was standing by the door, so I've overheard every single word you've both said right from the start. Well, Sostratos, I think you've been a very good friend to me, and I very much appreciate your friendship. But I don't want to shoulder any burdens too big for me, and what's more, I couldn't even if I wanted to.

SOSTR. I haven't got the faintest idea what you mean!

GORG. I'm letting you marry my sister, but as to my marrying yours, no thank you.

SOSTR. What do you mean, "no thank you"?

GORG. When I want to live like a lord, I'll do it by my own exertions, not by stealing the fruits of other people's labours.

SOSTR. That's rubbish, Gorgias. Don't you consider yourself worthy of this marriage?

GORG. I regard myself as quite worthy of the girl; it's just that I don't think it right to take so much when you only possess so little.

KALL. By Zeus, I appreciate your scruples, but you're a fool!

GORG. Why?

KALL. Because you've got nothing, and you want to act like a millionaire! And besides, you see, I've quite made up my mind about your marriage.

GORG. Er, what you say, it's a sort of double inducement to me ...

KALL. Yes, and just consider your own stepfather - doesn't he, with his crazy, beggarly existence, show you the road to your own salvation?

GORG. Very well, you win. So I suppose all we need is a formal betrothal.

(KALLIPPIDES goes through the ceremony of betrothal with considerably more grace and thoroughness than GORGIAS did in the previous act.)

Act Five

KALL. (performing the ceremony of betrothal) I hereby betroth my daughter to thee, young man, for the propagation of lawful offspring. And the amount of her dowry shall be, let me see, fifteen thousand pounds.

GORG. (showing astonishment at the amount, but not wishing to be outdone) And I've got five thousand, as my sister's dowry.

KALL. You keep it, my lad, don't offer too much!

GORG. But I have got it put away...

KALL. Now Gorgias, don't split your farm, keep it all together. And you must bring your mother and your sister to meet our womenfolk at the party in the shrine; no time like the present.

GORG. Yes, that's only right.

SOSTR. Look, let's all have a party tonight, here in the shrine! 850 And tomorrow we'll be able to have the wedding ceremonies. Oh, and bring the old man, too, Gorgias. It'll be better for him there, he'll get looked after better, perhaps, if he's with us.

GORG. He won't agree, Sostratos.

SOSTR. You try to persuade him.

GORG. I will if I can.

(GORGIAS moves away from the other two, in the direction of Knemon's door, but he does not knock and go into Knemon's house until the end of the next speech.)

SOSTR. We men ought to have plenty to drink, father, and the women will be able to have an all-night feast. Do you two approve?

KALL. On the contrary, it'll be the women that get plenty to drink, and it'll be us men that are kept up all night, if I know anything about it. But I'll go and sort out a few things that may come in useful.

(KALLIPPIDES moves away from SOSTRATOS towards the shrine, but does not enter the shrine until after Sostratos' next remark, addressed to him.)

Act Five

SOSTR. You do that, father. (Exit KALLIPPIDES; the rest of SOSTRATOS' speech is a soliloquy.) A wise man never despairs completely about any adventure. You can scale any summit, or catch any quarry, by hard work and attention to detail. I've just given you an example: in one single day, I've succeeded in making a match that nobody in the whole, wide world would have thought remotely possible.

(GORGIAS has passed from Knemon's to his own house in the middle of the last speech, and now re-enters the stage from his own house, bringing with him his mother Myrrhine and Knemon's DAUGHTER, his step-sister. He shepherds them towards the shrine.)

GORG. (addressing Myrrhine and KNEMON'S DAUGHTER) This way now, better hurry!

(SOSTRATOS goes up to them, welcomes them, and then leads the way to the entrance of the shrine.)

SOSTR. (calling inside) Mother, come and receive your guests.

(SOSTRATOS' mother appears from the shrine: she is introduced to her guests, welcomes them, and leads Myrrhine and KNEMON'S DAUGHTER into the shrine with her.
Sostratos turns reluctantly away from KNEMON'S DAUGHTER.)

SOSTR. What about Knemon? Isn't he here yet?

GORG. He begged us to take his old servant-woman, but he wouldn't come himself. He said he preferred to be utterly and completely alone!

SOSTR. What a character! You can't do anything with him.

GORG. No, that's just like him...

SOSTR. Well, we mustn't worry about him now. Let's go inside.

GORG. No, just a minute, Sostratos. I'm a bit shy - it's the women, we'll be in the same room...

SOSTR. Oh, rubbish, come on. You ought to remember, it's all in the family now!

(GORGIAS and SOSTRATOS exeunt into the shrine: immediately SIMIKE appears from Knemon's house, talking back into the house.)

Act Five

SIMIKE Yes, I swear I will go, too. You can lie down there all by yourself, and enjoy your own miserable company. They wanted to take you into the shrine with them, and you refused. And let me tell you, one day something awful will happen to you, oh, a lot worse than this. Still, I hope you'll be all right.

(SIMIKE is about to go into the shrine, but hesitates when she sees emerge from it, first, a flute-player, who stations himself at the side of the stage, and plays fortissimo the whole time, and secondly, GETAS, who comes cautiously out, peering conspiratorially. But when he speaks, he has to shout, to make himself heard above the sound of the music.)

GETAS I'll go and see how the old man's getting on. (He creeps about the stage, peering into Knemon's window and through the keyhole. He turns to the flute-player, who goes on playing as loudly as he can.) What are you playing like that for, you miserable creature? Can't you see I'm busy? They've sent me to keep an eye on him, the fellow who's hurt himself. Oh, stop a minute (to the flute-player)!

SIMIKE I don't care which of you goes in and sits with him, I want to have a nice chat with mistress, and say good-bye to her, before we send her away.

GETAS That's very sensible, you go inside. (Exit SIMIKE into the shrine.) Meanwhile I'll look after him as tenderly as a child. You know, [I've been praying for something like this] for a long time. [It's a chance to get our own back. I'm not going to miss this] opportunity, but it's [difficult to see how it's going to be] organised. [I know, I've got it! He's lame, he won't be able to catch us, we'll be able to avoid his whip.] No, he won't be able [to do more than totter a few steps. That's it. Here,] come here, Sikon, quick, look sharp about it! (GETAS has shouted the last remark in the direction of the shrine.) Wonderful! What sport you'll have, my boy! (SIKON comes out from the shrine.)

SIKON Do you want me?

GETAS Yes. Do you want to get your revenge for your recent sufferings?

SIKON My recent sufferings? What the hell are you burbling about?

Act Five

GETAS Listen. That bad-tempered old crank's all alone in there, asleep.

SIKON That puts the finishing touch to his miserable misery!

GETAS Look. He won't be able to get onto his feet and use his whip on us.

SIKON No, he won't be able to stand up at all.

GETAS That's the nicest part of it. I know what I'll do: I'll go in, and ask to borrow something.

SIKON He'll go absolutely berserk!

GETAS What about this for an idea, then? Let's start by bringing him outside, and putting him just here. (He indicates a spot in the middle of the stage.) Then we can bang on his door, and pretend we want to borrow things. It'll drive him 900 scarlet with rage. Let me tell you, it'll be the best bit of fun I've ever had.

SIKON There's only one thing - I'm scared of that Gorgias finding us. He'll play hell if he does.

GETAS Oh, they're making too much noise in there. They're all drinking; nobody will notice us. This is all ours. Besides, the fellow ought to be quite civil to us - we're all in the family now, aren't we? He's related to us. And if he's always going to be a relative of ours, he'll be a big enough millstone round our necks in future.

SIKON Millstone's the word.

GETAS Anyway, you try and get him out here, in front of the house, without being seen. Just bring him a little way in front of the door, that's all.

SIKON (preparing to enter Knemon's house, on tiptoe) Now just wait a minute, don't you be running off and leaving me here. That's all I ask. And in heaven's name, don't make a noise!

GETAS Well, I'm not making any noise, am I? (During GETAS' remark, SIKON enters Knemon's house with exaggerated care, and returns onto the stage carrying KNEMON, who is fast asleep.) To the right. (SIKON carries his burden to GETAS' right: i.e., the audience's left and centre-stage.)

Act Five

SIKON There.

GETAS Put him down. (SIKON gently lays his burden down on the ground.) Now's the time.

SIKON I'll lead off, and you keep in time with me. (SIKON begins the chant, with heavily-stressed rhythm, and GETAS joins in at the second "Boy". The two bang on Knemon's door in time with their chant, and they make a steady crescendo.) Boy, boy, I say, any servant there? Boy, boy, anyone at home there? (KNEMON wakes up.)

KNEMON Oh, oh dear me. (He tries to sit up.) Oh, I'm helpless!

SIKON and GETAS (with the same effects as before) Boy, boy, I say, any servant there? Boy, boy, anyone at home there?

KNEMON What's happening? Oh, I'm helpless!. Who are you? You must come from there (indicating the shrine), I suppose. What do you want?

SIKON (dancing up to KNEMON) Oh, I'd like to borrow from you some large boiling-pots and a bowl. (SIKON darts away after making this request.)

KNEMON Oh, who'll put me on my feet?

GETAS (dancing up to KNEMON) Oh, I wonder if you have really got what we want? Er, seven tripods and a dozen assorted small tables. (He goes to Knemon's house, and shouts inside) Boys, for heaven's sake, convey my requests to the good people of the house! I'm in a hurry.

KNEMON Look. I haven't got any.

GETAS You haven't got any?

KNEMON Haven't I told you a million times?

GETAS All right, I'm off. (GETAS retreats backstage.)

KNEMON This is awful! How did I get out here? Who's put me in front of the house like this? (SIKON dances up to Knemon's door.) Oh, go away, you!

Act Five

SIKON (shouting and knocking at the door in time) Boy, boy, I say! Women, men, porter!

KNEMON You're mad, fellow. You'll break the door down.

SIKON (turning to KNEMON) I say, you couldn't let us have nine rugs, could you?

KNEMON And where would I get them from, indeed?

GETAS (dancing up to KNEMON, on the other side of him from SIKON) And I'd like a big Persian openweave carpet, a hundred feet by a hundred.

KNEMON I wish I owned one.

GETAS But surely you have one?

KNEMON Now, where would I get one from? Old woman! Oh, where's the old woman?

GETAS I'll have to go to somebody else's door, then. (He retreats backstage.)

KNEMON Oh, be off with you, both of you! Old woman! Simike! (SIKON now dances up to him.) Oh, God damn you, you miserable villain! What do you want?

SIKON I'd like to borrow a big bronze bowl for mixing wine in.

KNEMON If only somebody could put me on my feet...

GETAS (dancing up to KNEMON, on the other side of him from SIKON) And have you got, have you really got that carpet, dad?

SIKON (banging on Knemon's door in time with his words) Boy, boy, I say! (He turns again to KNEMON.) And haven't you got the bronze bowl either?

KNEMON Oh, I'll murder Simike!

SIKON Now, don't make a noise. Go to sleep nicely. You're a man who avoids crowds. You loathe women. You won't let us take you where they're having that nice party. Well, then, you'll just have to put up with this. There's nobody here to help you, so you can gnash your teeth just as much as you like!

Act Five

GETAS And now I'll tell you all about the party, and you'd better listen. [It's been a pretty good party - they didn't need] pressing nor [forcing to come. Well, it started with] the women on our side [really making] your wife and daughter [at home. That was] the first [thing on the agenda]. They were all having a lovely time. Now I was getting the drinks ready upstairs for the men - are you listening? You'd better not go to sleep. (He shakes KNEMON, to keep him awake.)

KNEMON Yes, I am. Don't! (GETAS continues shaking him) Oh, oh!

SIKON Don't you want to go to the party? Well, pay attention to what happened next. I scattered cushions on the ground, and put the tables out. That was my job, you see. Are you listening? (He shakes KNEMON) I happen to be a cook by profession. Remember that: a cook. And cooks aren't to be trifled with! Anyway, there was someone else, inclining into an inclined, hollow, concave, circular hemisphere twenty litres of frothy-capped, white-headed, ancient, very old juice of Bacchus. He mingled with it liquid H-two-O from the fountain of the nymphety Nymphs. He then handed the result round to the men, and there was somebody else to do the pouring for the women. They lapped it up - it was just like pouring water into sand. Do you follow me? And there was one of the servant-girls got a bit 950 drunk, a chit with a pretty face and flowers in her hair. She started dancing, and kept time quite demurely as she tottered about. Then a second person got up, and joined hands with her, and danced. Now what about you? After your awful accident? Why don't you dance, too? Come on, you join in! (They force KNEMON onto his feet and waltz him ludicrously round the stage.)

KNEMON Oh, beat me up if you like, rather that than this!

SIKON No, you go on dancing just as you are! It's impolite to refuse a dance.

KNEMON No, no, in heaven's name!

SIKON Then will you let us take you to the party?

KNEMON Oh, what am I to do?

SIKON You can dance...

Act Five

KNEMON Oh, no! You can carry me in to the party, then. Perhaps it'll be better to submit to the tortures they have in there.

GETAS You're very, very wise. Well, we've succeeded at last. Three cheers for our victory! (He goes to the entrance of the shrine, and shouts inside) Donax boy, Syros, yes, and you, too, Sikon! (Two menservants appear from the shrine, and SIKON joins them) Now, you three lift him up and carry him inside. (The three lift KNEMON carefully up, and as they carry him slowly into the shrine, GETAS addresses KNEMON) And be very careful, if we find you annoying us ever again, we'll not treat you so considerately next time, believe me. Well, let's have some garlands and a reveller's torch. (KNEMON is carried into the shrine, and then SIKON comes back onto the stage with garlands and torches.)

SIKON Take this. (He hands a garland and a torch to GETAS, and they bind the garland round their temples. GETAS now goes into the shrine, and SIKON comes forward to deliver the epilogue.)

SIKON Well then, if you've enjoyed the way
We've overcome this surly chap,
Boys, girls, men, ladies, all, I say,
Be generous please, and clap, clap, clap!
And may that noble, laughing maiden gay,
Success, attend you kindly every day!

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NOTES

p.viii: It is morning. The action of the play takes a whole day. It begins in the early morning; by the end of the second act it is mid-morning; by the end of the third act it is noon; and by the end of the play it is evening, with the light fading.

p.2 : rather a man about town. In a production of this play, this phrase might be replaced by something more topical: e.g., 'rather a city-slicker', or 'rather U', or 'definitely IN'.

p.2 : and his parasite with him. The parasite was usually a poor young man, who obtained free board by attaching himself to a rich young man, and in return for his food acted the part of jack-of-all-trades to his patron. One of his specialities was buffoonery and jesting at the rich young man's dinner-parties. According to our ancient authorities, he tended to be sunburnt, and always wore black.

p.4 : PYRRHIAS rushes blindly onto the stage. The Greek stage was long and narrow, so that an actor had time and space to deliver several sentences between his entry and his addressing other characters already on the stage. A modern producer might find it convenient to make use of side gangways for this purpose, the actor delivering his introductory asides or soliloquy before mounting onto the actual stage.

p.6 : KNEMON now enters. Knemon's entry might be managed like that of Pyrrhias before him.

p.9 : The local choir ... enter, and entertain the audience with an entr'acte. It seems to have been the normal practice in comedies of this period for the chorus to be introduced at the end of the first act as a tipsy band of revellers. Their function was simply to entertain the audience between the acts, while the actors took a short rest and the audience imagined an interval of time to elapse in the dramatic plot. The words of these choral entr'actes were not preserved in the texts of the plays that were handed down to succeeding generations: in their place we find a brief note: 'for the chorus'. We must assume that the chorus here sang the popular songs of the time, or ephemera whose topicality was confined to the period when these plays were first produced. Their most apposite substitute in a modern production of the Dyskolos would clearly be the popular songs of the mid-twentieth century or revue-type compositions satirising the contemporary scene.

p.12. : the god Pan and these nymphs by his side. Sostratos points to a statue of Pan in front of his shrine and to terra-cotta statuettes of the nymphs scattered about the precincts. It is essential here for Sostratos to make a pause after the words 'if I've done what you say' for dramatic effect.

p.12. : property worth perhaps ten thousand pounds. In the Greek 'two talents': i.e., silver coins to the weight of about 500 lbs. The figure I have given is a rough guess at its present-day purchasing power.

p.15 : mumbling. The words that Sikon mumbles seem to be a conventional form of greeting to Pan, whose temple or statue could never be passed without such a greeting.

p.16 : Pan of Paiania. Paiania is another village of Attica, well to the east of Phyle. To reach it from Phyle, it is necessary to cross two mountains (Parnes and Hymettos); hence the speaker's words.

p.18 : for your lazy hands. Sikon might here be produced taking a swing at Getas, with Getas eluding the blow.

p.27 : Ladies and gentlemen. In the Greek, the address is to gentlemen only.

p.37 : a flute-player. This flute-player's job was to accompany all that part of the play written in the livelier metres, such as the iambic tetrameters of which the remainder of this play, apart from the final envoi, consists. He would normally stand at the side of the stage, playing the double-flute. In a modern production, however, it would be less confusing to the audience if the part of the flute-player were taken by Parthenis, emerging from the shrine before Getas, and playing her flute at dramatically apt moments, the choice of which the producer must make for himself.

p.38 : SIKON . . . returns onto the stage carrying KNEMON, who is fast asleep. The text does not indicate how Sikon carries his burden. Perhaps the most dramatically effective method is to put Knemon onto a pallet of some kind, or into a cradle. If a cradle is used, it affords pleasantly amusing business below (p.40 : Sikon's 'Go to sleep nicely'.)

p.40 : Go to sleep nicely. If Knemon is in a cradle, these words could be accompanied by Sikon's rocking it gently.

p.41 : inclining into an inclined, hollow, concave, circular hemisphere .. The original Greek here seems to be a parody of the fantastic circumlocutions and experiments with language of the dithyrambic poets.

p.42 : garlands and torches. The garlands are wreaths of ivy leaves, as worn by Greek revellers and roisterers. The torches would normally be nothing more than bundles of pine or fir sticks, secured together.

